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BASQUES IN STOCKTON

A

STUDY OF ASSIMILATION

By

Carol Pagliarulo

Stockton

1948

A Thesis

Submitted to the Department of Sociology

College of the Pacific

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PREFACE

In Stockton today there is a small number of persons who come under the category, Basque. As the origin of the Basques and their language is as yet undetermined, it lends a somewhat mysterious air to them.

The purpose of this study is to determine whether the Basques, more particularly the younger generation, are becoming assimilated into the community. Are they Basque in their manner of living, or are they American?

Within the scope of this study fall some 219 individuals organized into eighty-seven family groups. They are the first and second generation families and their unmarried children living at home. Most of the material for this paper was gathered from them by personal interview. Very little was obtained from other sources, primarily because the author has no facility with French, Spanish, or Basque, in which languages most of the material is to be found.

The study will cover two major phases. The first deals with an explanation of assimilation, historical background and other facts about the Basque people. The second section covers actual facts found in the survey made of the Basques in Stockton. The conclusion presents a brief summary of these findings. It will attempt to answer whether or not assimilation has taken place, and if it has, why.

The classic definition of assimilation by Park and Burgess is, "Assimilation is a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups, and, by sharing their experiences and history, are incorporated with them in a cultural life."[1]

Assimilation may be of two types: cultural or social. Cultural assimilation involves the merging of a subordinate and a dominant culture. In this merging some aspects of the minority group culture are taken up and become a part of the dominant culture. In social assimilation there is no merging of culture; there is no vestige of the minority culture to be found in the majority culture. Social assimilation in the social usage refers to

> "the process by which persons who are unlike in their social heritages come to share the same body of sentiments, traditions, and loyalties. It is interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups, and by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a cultural life."[2]

Is this what has happened to the Basques in Stockton? Has social assimilation taken place? In order to answer these questions certain cultural and social phenomena, among which are marriage, education, occupation, language, and organizations, will be examined. In the course of discussion, changes from the pattern of the Basque culture to that of the American culture will be indicated to point out the degree of social assimilation.

[1] R.E. Park and E.W. Burgess, Introduction to the Science of Sociology, 735 (1921).

[2] Ibid.

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CHAPTER I

HISTORY, ANTHROPOLOGY AND ETHNOLOGY[1]

On the Bay of Biscay, where the Pyrenees slope to meet the sea, is the country of the Basques, a territory about the size of Belgium, consisting of seven provinces, three of which are in France, the rest in Spain. The language and origin of these peoples are unknown. Nevertheless, despite warfare and the political upheavals of centuries they still preserve many of their old traditions and ceremonial. The men are fine singers, athletes and dancers.

The earliest notices of the geography of Spain, from the fifth century B.C. represent Spain as occupied by a congeries of tribes distinguished mainly as Iberi, Celtiberi and Celts. These had no cohesion unless temporarily united against some common foe. They were at war with one another and in constant movement. The ruder tribes were constantly being driven northwards by the advancing tide of Mediterranean civilization. According to some historians the tribes in the South had written laws, poems and literature. We have only some inscriptions, legends on coins, marks on pottery and megalithic monuments, in alphabets slightly differing, and belong to six geographical districts. As yet they have need of interpretation. However,

[1] What is said herein is largely a paraphrase, unless so indicated, from the article on "Basques" by Webster and Vinson in the Encyclopeadia Britanica, 1910 edition, Vol. III, 485-487.

they show that a like general language was once spoken through the whole of Spain, and for a short distance on the northern slope of the Pyrenees. The character of the letters is clearly of Levantine origin, but the particular alphabets to which each may be referred and their connection with the Basque are still to be determined.

On the origin of the Basques the chief theories are:

1. That they are descended from the tribes whom the Greeks and Latins called Iberi;

2. That they belong to some of the fairer Berber tribes and through the ancient Libyans from a people depicted on the Egyptian monuments;

3. The Atlantic theory, that they belong to a lost Atlantic continent, whose inhabitants were represented by the Guanches of the Canary Islands, and by a fair race on the Western coast of Africa;

4. That they are an indigenous race, who have never had any greater extension than their present quarters.

These theories have been espoused by different historians and anthropologists, each with fragments of proof that seems to indicate his particular theory was correct. Nevertheless, sufficient evidence has yet to be discovered that would indicate any one of them is definitely true. Not one reference used has said as much.

The Basques allege they were the first inhabitants of Spain and fought and repelled the Phoenicians, the Romans, the Visigoths, the Arabs, and the armies of Charlemagne. The fact that they submitted only when the combined forces of Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco fought them at once makes them both proud and humble. The Spanish Basques

assert that their country was once part of seven provinces that spilled over into France. The nation was severed in the sixteenth century. One hundred and twenty thousand French Basques still live in three provinces of South-West France. They help their blood brothers but share no separatist movement.[1]

The country was a separate entity till 1839. Up to that time they existed under Spain and France as Canada does to England today. The Republic of Euskadi is what the Basques call their little country. In 1933 three of the four Spanish Basque provinces voted themselves their freedom. It lasted ten months. Spain would not allow them their freedom because their provinces possessed 59% of Spain's explosive industries, 53% of Spain's merchant marine, and controlled a large portion of the banking and mining interests. The Basques are proud of their year of self-government, for they proved themselves capable of it. They are still fighting for self-government and are almost completely supported by Basques in Oregon, Utah, and California. The Spanish Basque drive for self-government is not shared by the inhabitants of Basque provinces in France, although they are sympathetic toward the cause of their fellow Basques. However, the French Basques have not within recent years had to contend with a civil war and the political pressures brought on by the rule of Franco.[2]

[1] I. Wallace, "Euskadi Fights On," Catholic World, CLXV, 210 (June, 1947), a paraphrase.

[2] Ibid.

While interviewing through an interpreter a recently arrived French Basque who had spent the last few years in Spanish territory, a question was asked pertaining to politics. She refused to comment on the subject and immediately began talking on another topic.[1] The subject could not be reintroduced.

> The Basques -- hard-drinking, non-swearing, mostly pious farmers and fishermen -- are one of the most mysterious races on earth. Neither Spanish nor French nor anything known, they are a "race" apart, like men dropped from Mars. No one knows where they come from. Archeologists can find no scratched stones or monuments; historians can locate no written records; philogists can find no family tree for their language. Their present customs are as unusual as their past is puzzling.[2]

The physical anthropologists in general can differentiate the Basques from their neighbors, for they are darker and shorter than northern Europeans but fairer and taller than southern Europeans; the profile is often very delicate; the carriage remarkably upright; they are neither predominantly brachycephalic nor dolichocephalic. They belong to the Alpine classification of the Caucasian race. As is true of many such descriptions and classifications, every member of the group does not fit the design; the Basques are no exception. Furthermore, other peoples of Europe fall within the Alpine classification. Among the Basques there are different physical types; yet, when they emigrate to other countries they are known as Basques, distinct from all other peoples.

The physical characteristics of the Basques in Stockton are

[1] Interview No. 1, Miss M.

[2] I. Wallace, op. cit., 211.

not so unique as to be readily noticed by the layman's inexperienced eye. The color of hair ranges from blonde to black, with medium browns in predominance. The majority have brown or brown-green eyes, but there is still a noticeable number who have blue eyes. The majority have clean cut profiles with straight noses. This description differs little from a description which might be applied to several other ethnic groups of European background. It would be impossible to select those of Basque ancestry from a group.

With regard to various fragments of culture that might be used as an indication of origin, no aid is to be got from folk-tales because none can be considered exclusively Basque and the literature is altogether too modern. A fast disappearing survival in the old world is the "laya", a two-pronged short-handled steel digging fork used instead of a plough. The Basques alone of all the peoples of Europe have preserved specimens of almost every class of dance known to primitive races; they range from animal and harvest dances to those of a religious nature which are almost pagan. The Old Basque House is a product of a land where stone and timber were equally abundant. The stone forms the foundation and rear wall and timber furnishes the remainder of the structure. The ground floor area is used for the stock and the top floor is used for living quarters. In customs, in institutions, in civil and political life there is no one thing that we can say is peculiarly and exclusively Basque; but their entire system taken together marks them off from other people and especially from their neighbors.

The Basque people are very aware of their ethnic identity. "They dislike, in fact they almost loathe, being mistaken or called French or Spanish."[1] They are Basque, and they are ready to make you aware of the fact.

[1] D.C. Fischer, Basque People, 20 (1931).

CHAPTER II

WHY AND WHEN THEY CAME

When the old, self-sufficient village industries declined in consequence of the invention of machinery and manufacture elsewhere, the Basque entered at once upon emigration to the agricultural parts of the Americas, and the result has been that the Basque Provinces and the "pays"[1] Basque probably have never been more prosperous than they are now. As migration became a necessity, for the provinces of the Basque are no different from the rest of Europe in that respect, the Basques journeyed toward new lands and settled in places that were comparable to their native country. Hence, we have Basques in the fishing industries and agricultural areas, and they are noted for the raising of stock.

The early Basque immigrants started coming in small numbers around 1850, and a steady stream came in until about thirty years ago. The first of these came to the West Coast because this was the frontier country and they were farming people. Therefore there are a number of Basques in and around Stockton, because it is so like their native country. Many others followed, because they had relatives and friends here. Although the immigration laws cut down migration in large numbers, a few Basques have been coming over every

[1] Translation, country.

now and then. This was stopped again during the war, but has recently risen to a new peak. Those of the first generation who have become citizens are eligible to sign the necessary papers so as to secure a passport and visa for those they wish to bring over. This practice is carried on almost exclusively by the first generation Basques. They feel the ties of their old home more strongly. They alone are willing to sign for a friend, a cousin thrice removed, or a nephew. They will take the responsibility involved, but still it is only for the strong young men who can work at hard and difficult labor for whom they will sign.

For the most part, the second generation are not interested. They seem to be busy with their own lives and unwilling to assume such obligations. They do not seem to feel the ties of the "old country" as the older generation does. Yes, they would like to travel to the provinces of their parents, meet their relatives, stay a few months, but even this would not be the sole purpose. They would take in the rest of Europe as well. They have the attitude of most Americans; it would be nice to take a "grand tour", so to speak, and a few of them have.

If the question were asked: Why and when did you come? How was it when you first came?; most of the answers followed this trend of thought.

"The country was poor; there was little opportunity. The poor migrated here."[1]

[1] Interview No. 5, Mrs. I.

"Economically it was a poor country. There was no chance for expanding and bettering your life."[1]

"All of us came with the idea to make money."[2]

"I attribute the migration of the Basques to Stockton to adaptability of the surrounding area to sheep and cattle."[3]

"Many came to Stockton because their neighbors in the 'old country' were here."[4]

In a few cases, very few, they came because their parents were here.

When the Basques first came to Stockton, they were more or less a group. Their friends were almost exclusively Basque. Whether they were conscious of the fact or not, restricting their associates was a necessity until the English language was mastered. As it was, those who had been here long enough to speak and be understood were never so occupied that they had no time to help the newcomers with matters such as an introduction to a doctor, dentist, or perhaps a lawyer. They took the time to make their newly-arrived friends comfortable, aware of the laws and necessary folkways. They wished to aid the newcomers in becoming adjusted to their new way of life.

The following interview with Mrs. G. presents an adequate summary of the situation:

> The day I arrived in Stockton was my birthday. When I descended from the train, I was very depressed. It was my

[1] Interview No. 3, Mr. O.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Interview No. 2, Mr. C.

[4] Interview No. 4, Mrs. G.

> birthday. I was far away from my home and very homesick. Mrs. C. met me at the train; I was so happy to see someone I knew. Mrs. C's parents had a small farm next to the one of my parents. My longing for home was short in duration, for that night all the Basques in Stockton and vicinity gave me a wonderful party. I saw so many people I knew; many were from my own village or lived close by. I was so happy. We danced our native dances very late into the night. I talked until my voice was gone. I had such a good time and was so happy to be in America. It gives me great pleasure to recall my first night in this country.
>
> Mrs. C. was nice enough to find a position for me as a domestic servant in a place she had once worked. She was very kind to me, as well as all the other friends and even relatives that I had in Stockton. Those who could speak the English language were always kind enough to act in the capacity of interpreter whenever I was in need. We were always together on Sundays and had much fun entertaining one another. There were many more Basques in Stockton then, but many of the "old-timers" have passed on, and the younger generation have moved away into far and nearby areas. Most of the Basques in California have settled in Fresno and Bakersfield.[1]

While talking to Mrs. G., one had the feeling that she took much pleasure in the reminiscence of her youth. Mrs. C., another Basque woman, was present at the time of the interview, and they continued at great length discussing their early days in this country. Mrs. G.'s daughter, a young woman in her early thirties, remembers the Basque gatherings she attended when in her teens, but remarked that they had since been discontinued and that she sees little of the Basques socially, with the exception of the few elderly women who call on her mother.

Another Basque woman, Mrs. S., told the following in an interview:

> When a Basque comes to this country these days, the reception is quite different from the time when I was young and came here. Take Miss N., for example. She was given work and a place to stay

[1] Interview No. 4, Mrs. G.

> by some Basques here in Stockton, but that was all. Not one of them introduced her around to the right people. She was not received with the great reception that would have been due her had she arrived thirty years ago or before. I helped her out in the little things of which I am capable; she was very pleased when we went to the College of the Pacific to arrange for her lessons in English. I enjoy her to a great extent, because she is so nice and does remind me of my first years here.[1]

Mrs. S. was disheartened because of the differences in attitudes toward newcomers that prevail among the Basques today. She dislikes the disunity, the lack of feeling for the fellow countryman as an individual that existed at one time. She sees vaguely, but understands little, the very American attitude of not exactly dislike or distrust but the maintenance of a small degree of social distance between the old, established family and the newly-arrived immigrant.

In History of San Joaquin County, California with Biographical Sketches[2], within which a short biographical sketch is given of many of the men and women important in the development of San Joaquin County, there are ten men of Basque origin discussed. Two of these have been selected for this paper. It is interesting to note that the biographies vary only in minor points, and the two selected are men still living.

> D. Y., a successful San Joaquin County sheepman, is a native of the Basses--Pyrenees, where he was born on December 9, 1873. He was one of four children. He, with

[1] Interview No. 6, Mrs. S.

[2] G. Tinkham, History of San Joaquin County, California, with Biographical Sketches, 1114 (1929).

his brother P. crossed the ocean and remained in Stockton. Owing to the unfavorable economic conditions in his native country, D. had very little opportunity to go to school, and when only ten years old, started to earn his own living. He was able to make himself useful on the home farm caring for sheep and other stock. In 1894, he came to the United States, bringing with him valuable experience in his line. Los Angeles was the first district in which he pitched his tent, and there he worked two years. Then he went up to Plumas County and herded sheep for a summer. Later he went on to Delta Islands in San Joaquin County, where he herded sheep and did various kinds of farm labor.

In 1900, he started in the sheep business for himself, buying sheep, feeding them on the range, and selling them again, getting together as many as 2,000 head.

In 1915, he returned to his native home and married Miss F. U., who was born in the vicinity of their old home. They had two children. Mr. Y. purchased for his bride an attractive home on South San Joaquin Street in Stockton. There he has resided ever since, while continuing the raising of high grade sheep.[1]

Enterprising, successful sheepman, who has been abundantly rewarded for his years of hard work and sacrifices, is Mr. R. N., who was born in the Basses--Pyrenees in 1878.

Mr. N. attended the grammar school at Bigone, France, but only for the first time when he was eight years of age and then for just a brief period of two short years, for when he was eleven years of age, he commenced to help run the farm. He remained with his father until 1900, when he came to the United States. He came directly to San Francisco, but did not remain there long, for he soon found work as a sheepherder, and for a short time was engaged in that employment in Fresno County, continuing there for five years and then he moved to Stockton.

He then commenced to buy, feed, and sell sheep, and through sparing no efforts to supply just what his patrons asked for, he built up a reputation that was an asset in itself, and came to be favorably known as one of the best sheepmen in the county. He still engages in running sheep on rented land in Fresno, Merced, and San Joaquin Counties. He usually keeps

[1] Ibid., 1624.

> from 3000 to 7,000 head and has in the main been successful and has become a very prosperous man; at times he has met with reverses; in 1918, 1,000 head died in one day from poison.
>
> While at San Francisco, in May, 1905, Mr. N. was married to M. O., who came from the same mountain district as he and had made the trip alone from France to California. Mr. N. bought a fine residence in September in 1918. He also owns the Royal Hotel. Mr. N. is a staunch Republican.[1]

From the ten biographies given on Basques there were certain points common to all. They were:

1. All had a nominal amount of education.

2. They all came from small farms.

3. All of them were at one time or another connected with the sheep industry and remained so until retirement with the exception of one.

4. When political affiliation was mentioned, it was invariably Republican.

5. They all make excellent examples of the typical success story.

[1] Ibid, 1404.

CHAPTER III

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BASQUES

"The most marked features in the Basque character are an intense self-respect, a pride of race and an obstinate conservatism."[1] Much has been written in ridicule of the claim of all Basques to be noble, but this was a fact both in the laws of Spain and in practice. Every Basque free holder could prove himself noble, and thus was eligible to any office. He knows nothing about class wars, because they have never been divided into classes. During the days when a man had to be of the nobility to enjoy personal liberty, the Basques solved the problem by declaring all Basques noblemen. Even to this day, in the native Basque land he hates titles and refuses to address even a stranger as Mister.

This attitude does not prevail among the Basques of Stockton. Even the first generation have adopted our form of addressing people, although it does not conform to the folkways of their native country. The Basques of Stockton are also aware of our yardstick for the measurement of one's place on the social scale. Take, for example, the place of residence. Many of the families lived, and some still do, on South San Joaquin Street, a section in the less fashionable part of town. There has been a definite movement into

[1] W. Webster and J. Vinson, op. cit., 486.

the restricted "upper" class areas.

The Basques are not an urban people, although there are some large cities in their native country, Bayonne with a population of 31,350, and Bilbao with a population of 195,186. A Basque village consists of a few houses; the population lives in scattered habitations. They do not fear solitude, and this makes them excellent emigrants and missionaries. Many of the Basques living in Stockton today spent many of their early years here on sheep and cattle ranches, but as they became well established and more prosperous, they purchased beautiful homes in the city. Many Basques live now in urban areas. This pattern is different from the rural pattern of their native country. Furthermore, it is this disposition toward solitude which helped the Basques who settled in this vicinity do well in their business.[1]

They are splendid seamen and were early famed as fishermen in the Bay of Biscay. They were the first to establish the cod-fisheries off the coast of Newfoundland. Of the early Basques that settled in Stockton and vicinity, about two had at one time fished, but even they, along with the rest, were of a farm background.

The Basques took their full part in the colonization of America. Basque names abound in the older colonial families.[2] Basque newspapers are published in Buenos Aires and in Los Angeles but not in Stockton. Because of the small number, it does not

[1] See chapter VII, page 38, Occupation.

[2] D.C. Fischer, The Basque People, 1-24 (1931).

warrant such an institution.

In civil institutions and in the tenures of property the legal position of women was very high. The eldest born, whether boy or girl, inherited the ancestral property, and this was not only among the upper classes but among the peasantry also. In the folkways an insult in the presence of women is punished more severely than a similar offence among men. This does not prevent the women from working as hard, if not harder, than the men.

Of course, the practices of the Basques here with regards to women heirs to property, et cetera, follow the laws of this country. The women, however, did not take on immediately the practices of women in this country in similar financial positions. This is to say, for example, the practice of afternoon shopping and the movies.

In an interview with Mr. A., he said as follows:

> "The Basques are an extremely industrious people. They work hard; the women work hard. The women take in two or three jobs. They work harder than the men."[1]

Furthermore, as Mr. S. said in another interview:

> Their homes in the rural areas were purely functional at first. As they became successful financially, they became less thrifty and spent more on the niceties of life, often moving into town.[2]

A few descriptive notes on the Basques are:

> The average Basque is husky, handsome, swaggering, drinks an excess of wine, is a staunch Catholic, and the church is the hub of his community life.[3]

[1] Interview No. 10, Mr. A.

[2] Interview No. 11, Mr. S.

[3] I. Wallace, op. cit., 211.

> The Basque code is one of respect for morals and honesty, especially with regard to business. He dislikes the "business shark".[1]

> "The Basques are more European than most. When I came to collect money, to them I never came on business. I was making a social call. I had to come in, eat, drink, and talk. I met them in a business way and now have very good friends among them."[2]

In interviews it was almost much easier to talk to the older generation. Many of the second generation gave their time graciously, but they were really too busy and had many more pertinent things to do. Such was the impression given. With them the author did not find the abounding friendliness that could be attributed to the older generation. The first generation were more affable in that they were delighted to speak of the old days and did so with much enthusiasm.

[1] Interview No. 12, Mrs. N.

[2] Interview No. 11, Mr. S.

CHAPTER IV

A STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE BASQUE PEOPLE IN STOCKTON

As a basis for examining the nature and extent of assimilation among the Basques in Stockton, a brief statistical review of the local Basque population is here presented, based on a special survey made the fall term of 1947.

There are no figures issued by the Census Bureau on persons of Basque origin in the United States. Technically, their national origin (first generation) is France or Spain, and that is the only distinction made. Consequently, the gathering of the material on this chapter was a door-to-door process.

After several attempts, the following schedule evolved and was thereafter applied to all the Basques in the city within the scope of the study.

NAME ADDRESS

PARENTS	SEX	GENERATION	PLACE OF BIRTH	FRENCH OR SPANISH BASQUE
Husband				
Wife				
Children				
Age				

TIME IN STOCKTON Husband
Wife

From Basque people in the city lists of the names of other Basque residents were obtained. Then, by interviewing, the cards were filled out. The person interviewed not only answered questions pertaining to his own family but told what he could of other Basques living in Stockton. Also, the list of names continued to grow, for it was shown to all interviewed, and they would know of some one not mentioned. When the list stopped growing and cards were filled out for each name mentioned, it was evident that the work of collection had been completed and handling the material was to begin.

In the compiling and tabulating of the data certain definitions and explanations have been developed. A few are arbitrary in nature, but the following of such definitions and explanation has been consistent throughout the paper. They are as follows:

1. A Basque is one of the people that inhabited the region of the Western Pyrenees on the Bay of Biscay in Spain and France considered by ethnologists as either a distinct "race" of people (neither French nor Spanish) or a people that have become distinctive through long isolation together with their descendents.

2. A family is a group of individuals living in a household under one head. Exception has been made in this definition if married couples and their children were living with their parents because of the housing shortage or some other pertinent reason. In this case, they have been considered as if they were two families each household.

3. First generation persons are anyone of the Basque "nationality" not United States citizens by birth.

4. Second generation includes the children of these first generation persons that are natural born citizens. Many of the third generation Basques fall into the study, because they are children living at home with their second generation parents.

5. A child's generation will be determined by that of his father.

6. A child born of French and Spanish Basque parents will follow the national origin of the father.

7. If the paternal parent is not Basque, the national origin and generation will be determined by that of the mother.

There are many more Basques living in this area than are included in this study, but this study was confined to the boundaries of the city. Single men spending a month or two of each year in Stockton have been excluded from this paper.

The relatively permanent Basque community in Stockton is made up of 219 individuals, organized into eighty-seven family groups. Seventy-five of these persons comprise the "first generation" group, having been born abroad; forty-six[1], or 62%, in Spain; and twenty-nine[2], or 38%, in France. Fifty-seven percent are male, giving a sex ratio of 112.

[1] 23 female and 23 male.

[2] 20 female and 9 male.

One hundred persons are of the second generation group, fifty-one[1] (51%) of Spanish Basque origin and forty-nine[2] (49%) of French Basque origin. The birth rate of the first generation Basques is slightly higher than these figures would indicate, but it must be remembered that many of the second generation who ordinarily would have been here, had the study been made a few years ago, are no longer residents of Stockton for one reason or another.

The third generation number only forty-four, fifteen females and twenty-nine males. There is in this case an extraordinary predominance of males. The French Basque third generation children make up fifty-nine percent of the total. By looking at Table 1 (page 22) it is seen that the French Basques of the first generation are fewer in number than the Spanish Basques. This does not mean necessarily that fewer French Basques migrated to this country and their children have a higher birth rate, but that they are of an older age group (note the widows), and consequently, it is more probably that their children are of the child-bearing age.

Chart 1 (page 24) gives the material found in Table 1 in a hundred percent bar chart. It shows the percentage distribution of the Basque people in this city by sex, national origin, and generation.

[1] 25 female and 26 male.

[2] 22 female and 27 male.

Table 1

POPULATION DISTRIBUTION BY NUMBER AND PERCENTAGES OF BASQUE PEOPLE IN STOCKTON BY SEX, NATIONAL ORIGIN AND GENERATION FOR FALL, 1947

	Generation and Percentages							
	1a First	1b %	2a Second	2b %	3a Third	3b %	4a Totals	4b %
French								
Female	20	26%	22	22%	10	23%	52	24%
Male	9	12%	27	27%	16	36%	52	24%
Sub-Total	29	38%	49	49%	26	59%	104	48%
Spanish								
Female	23	31%	25	25%	5	11%	53	25%
Male	23	31%	26	26%	13	30%	62	27%
Sub-Total	46	62%	51	51%	18	41%	115	52%
Totals	75		100		44		219	

Of the total number of Basques in Stockton, thirty-three percent were born outside the United States; twenty-nine were born in France, and forty-six in Spain. One-hundred and twenty-five (58%) were born in the city of Stockton, and a very small number, nineteen, were born elsewhere in the United States. Chart 2

Table 2

PLACE OF BIRTH OF FIRST AND SECOND GENERATION BASQUE INDIVIDUALS IN STOCKTON
Fall, 1947

Place of Birth	
France	29
Spain	46
Stockton	125
Elsewhere in the United States	19
Total	219

(page 25) illustrates the percentage distribution in a pie diagram.

Judging from the number of persons born in Stockton, one might say that most of the first generation persons came directly to Stockton and settled, or at least soon after they were first married. Of the nineteen born outside of Stockton, some were born in Nevada, others in Utah, Oregon, and the rest in other cities in

Chart 1

PERCENTAGE Distribution of BASQUE PEOPLE IN Stockton by SEX, NATIONAL ORIGIN AND GENERATION

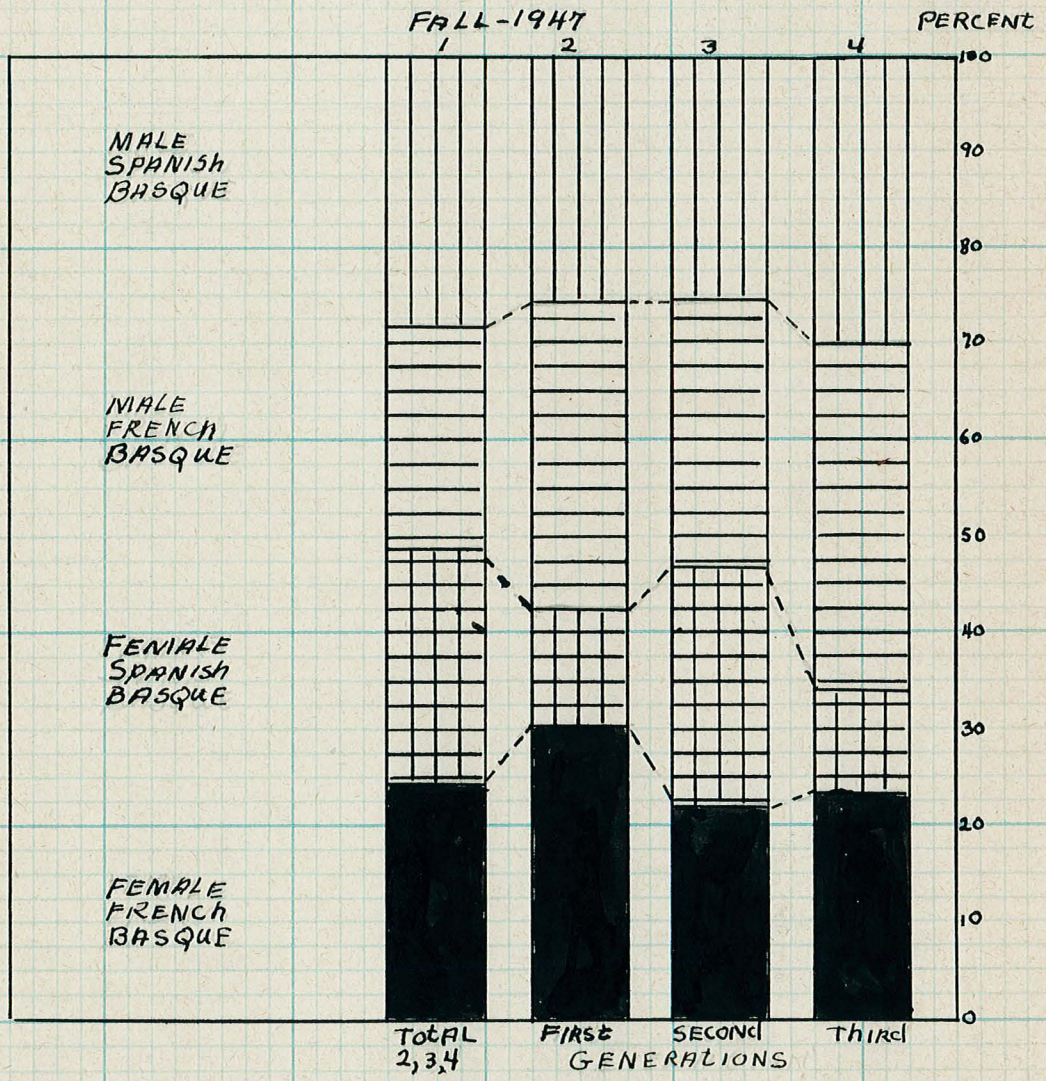
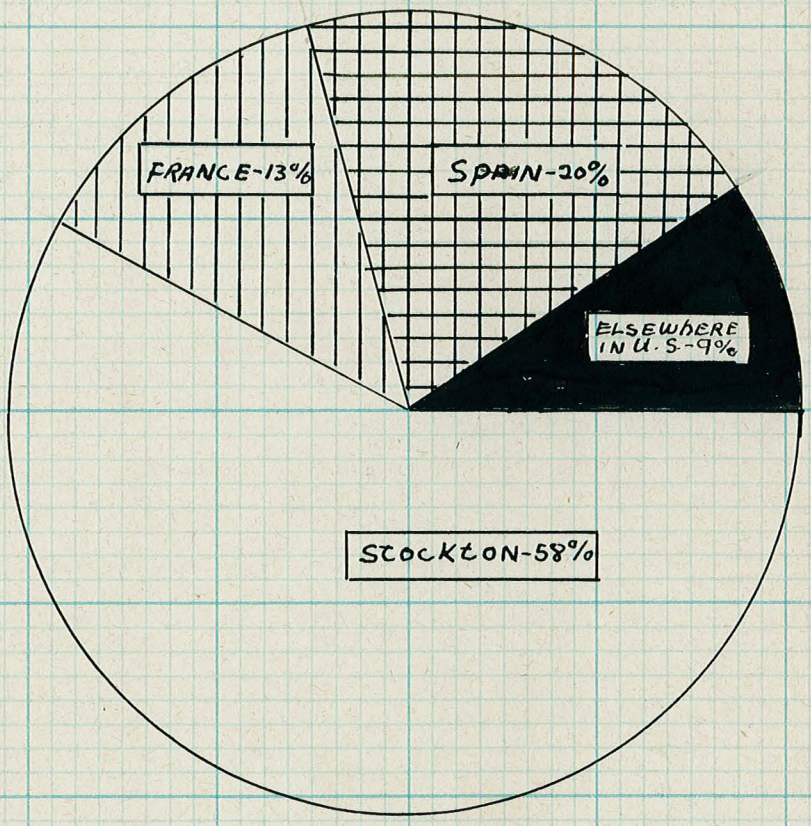


Chart 2

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF PLACES OF BIRTH OF BASQUE PEOPLE IN STOCKTON

FALL-1947



California (Bakersfield and San Francisco predominantly).

The first Basque settlers in this city came as early as 1850, but of these none are yet living.[1] Of those included, the time they have spent in Stockton ranges from a few weeks[2] to fifty-six years. Table 3 (below) furnishes a table of the time spent in Stockton by first and second generation Basque families by sex. A class interval of five years is used.

Table 3

TIME IN STOCKTON OF FIRST AND SECOND GENERATION BASQUE FAMILIES BY SEX FALL, 1947

Years	Total	Female	Male
Total	219	105	114
0.0 - 4.9	34	14	20
5.0 - 9.9	20	9	11
10.0 - 14.9	22	10	12
15.0 - 19.9	18	7	11
20.0 - 24.9	27	16	11
25.0 - 29.9	21	8	13
30.0 - 34.9	35	17	18
35.0 - 39.9	26	16	10
40.0 - 44.9	14	7	7
45.0 - 49.9	1	1	--
50.0 - 54.9	--	--	--
55.0 - 59.9	1	--	1

[1] G.H. Tinkham, History of San Joaquin County California with Biographical Sketches, 1415 (1929).

[2] This applies to two babies just born a few weeks before.

The sex and age distribution of unmarried second and third generation Basques may be seen in Table 4. There are twenty-one

Table 4

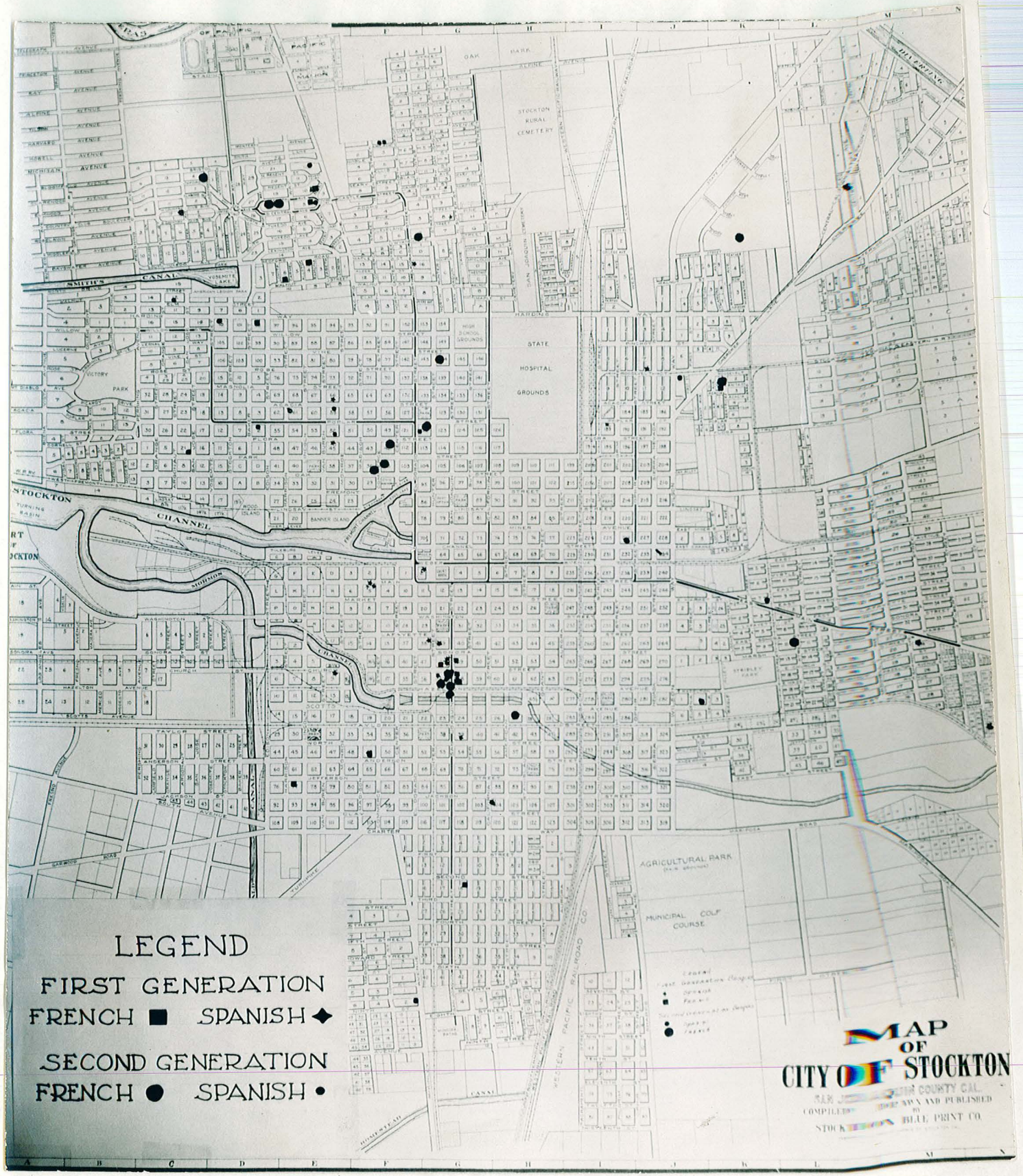
SEX AND AGE DISTRIBUTION OF UNMARRIED SECOND AND THIRD GENERATION BASQUES IN THE CITY OF STOCKTON FALL, 1947

	Generation						
	First			Second			
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Final Totals
0 4.9	2	1	3	10	19	29	32
5 9.9	4		4	3	9	12	16
10 14.9	3	4	7	1	1	2	9
15 19.9	3	6	9				
20 24.9	8	7	15	1	1	2	19
25 29.9	1	4	5				5
30 34.9		3	3				3
35 39.9		1	1				1
Totals	21	28	49	15	30	45	94

females and twenty-eight males, a total of forty-nine, unmarried Basque children of the first generation living at home. Of the forty-five children of second generation Basques, fifteen are female, and thirty are male.

In conclusion, these points should be made clear. The number of persons dealt with in this study are relatively small, and consequently it would be unwise to apply the conclusions drawn in this study to any other Basque group without discretion. Most of the Basques in Stockton were born here and because of this fact would not find it too difficult to conform themselves to the patterns set by other members of the community. Their parents as a group are not large in number and therefore collectively do not present a strong culture front as would the dominant culture in which they must live each day. With regards to the time spent in Stockton, if we excluded from the analysis the third generation, we would find that the averages would be somewhere over thirty years. To be exact, the mean was found to be 31.5, the mode 33.3, and the median 31.9. These figures apply only to the heads of Basque families; the family heads are another important influence in the carrying on of a culture. After an average of thirty years in a city in which social contacts are not exclusively Basque, it is fair to assume that at least to some small extent, if not more, there is going to be a breakdown in the less dominant culture, and a process of social assimilation will be taking place toward a majority American culture.

A logical consequence of the statistical analysis was a spot map (page 29) indicating the residence of each Basque family in Stockton. One glance at the map shows a dispersion of Basques in


LEGEND
FIRST GENERATION
FRENCH ■ SPANISH ◆
SECOND GENERATION
FRENCH ● SPANISH •
MAP OF CITY OF STOCKTON
STOCKTON RURAL CEMETERY
STATE HOSPITAL GROUNDS
SMITH'S CANAL
STOCKTON CHANNEL
AGRICULTURAL PARK
MUNICIPAL GOLF COURSE
WESTERN PACIFIC RAILROAD CO
BLUE PRINT CO

in every direction all over Stockton. The largest one concentration is in the South San Joaquin Street area. There are a few second generation families living in this area due largely to the housing shortage and the fact that parents own property in that location.[1] The district around South San Joaquin Street was one of the better residential areas in Stockton twenty-five or thirty years ago. It was there that the first generation Basques bought fine homes for their families as they became financial successes. Upon checking the city directory of 1928, it was discovered that the Basques listed were not concentrated in one close area except for the South San Joaquin and Hunter Street districts. However, the dispersion was not nearly so wide as it is today. Of course, many of the residential areas where Basques reside today were not developed at that time.

A second, but smaller, concentration is found in the Tuxedo Park district. This is a relatively new residential area, having been developed in the last thirty years, in which there is a number of first, as well as second, generation Basques. It is an assumption that the concentration, slight as it may be, is not due to any particular desire of the Basques to have persons of their own national origin as neighbors, but because it was and still is a new district and therein was the opportunity to purchase and build homes. It was also during this period that they were ready to buy.

[1] This information was sought when the concentration came to the author's attention.

It is the opinion of the author that this lack of concentration indicates that the Basques have no desire to live in a small community of their own, as may be found among other ethnic groups. They were not forced by restrictive covenants to live in certain areas, and they did not do so of their own accord. This lack of discrimination on the part of the older residents of the city might be a factor in their assimilation into the majority group.

CHAPTER V

MARRIAGE

All the male Basques but a negligible few migrated to this country as single men. None left wives behind; once they were married they were expected to stay on the ancestral family land. Furthermore, none married until according to standards of their group they were able to provide the necessities of family life. As the early years of the Basque male in this country was confined to sheep-herding,[1] it is quite obvious why they did not marry immediately, as the requirements of this work do not make the situation conducive to the institution of marriage.

Among the early Basque migrants it was the practice to return to their native land at such time as they were well established and financially able. They always returned to the United States and most frequently with a bride. The brides were usually young women whom they had known prior to their departure. Often they were from the same village or from one near by.[2]

An interview with Mr. O. sums up the story quite well.

> The men came over alone, and in most cases they became fairly well established economically before actual steps toward marriage were taken. Some of the men then sent

[1] See chapter VII, Occupations.

[2] H.G. Tinkham, op. cit., 1445.

> for their sweethearts, while others made trips to their former homes, married, and returned. Many single girls came to the United States to work, but they had relatives or friends here already with whom they could reside. Within this group were many young women of great beauty and also of marriageable age. So you see, there was plenty of opportunity to marry nice, beautiful Basque girls.[1]

Mr. O., who is quite humorous, went on to say, "I came to the United States a bachelor. I told my girl friend that if I didn't return in seven years not to wait for me. She became tired of waiting and so did I; we both eventually married someone else."

The Basques are firm believers in the sanctity of marriage and consequently frown very much on divorce. Only one case of divorce was discovered in the entire category. It was a point of discussion. This is due to the religious background of these people, not social pressure of the Basque people.

Furthermore, if a marriage is taking place between two parties of the Catholic faith, it is most often celebrated with a mass and hundreds of guests are invited. It is an occasion for great celebration, and all the Basques, as well as others, are invited. The guests of the second generation marriage are not nearly so confined to people of Basque origin as were the first generation, for they have many other friends. They still never fail to invite Basque friends of their parents, whom they may not

[1] Interview No. 3, Mr. O.

have seen for years. This was gathered from a list for wedding invitations shown me in an interview with Mrs. T.[1] It was so important that the Basques were listed on separate pages from the rest of the guests. This indicates a lesser degree of assimilation in that many were invited simply because they were old Basque friends.

The marriage survey reveals that there were forty-four Basque couples of the first generation. Of the forty-four only one was married to a non-Basque. Thirty-nine couples were of the same national origin. That is to say, the French and Spanish Basques very rarely intermarried; actually there were only six cases in which this happened. As for the second generation, of which we have forty-two couples, thirty-six married non-Basques. There are only six second generation Basque couples in which both parties are Basque. From the above, certain conclusions were gathered. Evidently the first generation Basques were prone to marry persons of their own ethnic and national background. This indicates somewhat of a group feeling, which does not exist among those of the second generation, as is shown by the quoted figures. To say the least, the decline of endogamy is another step toward social assimilation into the American pattern of life.

[1] Interview No. 13, Mrs. T.

CHAPTER VI

EDUCATION

The education of the first generation Basques that came to the United States was, for the most part, very limited. Of course, considering the period, education past the grade school was more often the exception rather than the rule. However, even those in the later migrations were not recipients of too much formal education.

In the old country, the school lessons were conducted in Spanish or French, not Basque, depending on which side of the border one lived. An interview with Mr. O. revealed the following:

> In school in France we were not allowed to speak Basque. We had to speak French at all times. It gave rise to a little game. If a student spoke in Basque, he was given a little round piece of wood. He had to keep it until someone else said something in Basque, at which time he could pass it on. The one who had it at the end of the school day had to stay an hour after school. It was called "le Baton Basque".[1]

In another interview Mrs. O. said:

> Most of us never went further than the eighth grade, and never gave much thought to going on because there were no other schools near by to attend. As it was, the educational system was far better on the French side than on the Spanish.[2] The Basques live in many small, isolated communities, and consequently on neither side of the

[1] Interview No. 3, Mr. O.

[2] Mrs. O. is French Basque, which might influence her belief.

> border were they offered the educational advantage that a more urban area might have.[1]

It must be remembered that the Basques who migrated to this country were primarily from the rural areas and consequently the educational system of the cities had not reached them thirty or forty years ago.[2]

With regard to the second generation, reports conflicted with the actual situation. In several interviews opinions such as the following were obtained:

From an interview with Mrs. D.:

> Basques don't seem to want to go on to college -- their parents would send them if they wished to go. Some would go a couple of years. Take the M's boy, for example. He is a teacher, but that is an exception.[3]

Again, in an interview with Mrs. P.:

> Basque parents like to see their children finish high school and then go to work with them on the ranch."[4]

While interviewing Mrs. R., this came out in the course of conversation:

> Basques admire the self-made man. The industrious man is superior to the well-educated man.[5]

As the situation was investigated, it was found that on the whole many of the second generation Basques had received education

[1] Interview No. 13, Mrs. O.

[2] See chapter VII, Occupation.

[3] Interview No. 9, Mrs. D.

[4] Interview No. 7, Mrs. P.

[5] Interview No. 14, Mrs. R.

beyond the high school level. It was true that many did not receive their college degrees, but they did attend one, two, and even three years before discontinuing. A number attended Stockton Junior College and College of the Pacific. A few attended the University of California, and two graduated. There is one Davis graduate on the roster, and some who attended Dominican College of San Rafael, St. Mary's and Santa Clara. There is a teacher in Sacramento, a second generation Basque from Stockton. There is a conspicuous lack of professional men and women of Basque origin from Stockton.

Therefore, the author believes that this is evidence contrary to statements made concerning education during certain interviews. This training in American schools is an important factor in the environment of any individual; this could be a single driving force toward change. The sending of their children on to school indicates a definite change from the pattern of education followed by the first generation. This indicates another trend toward social assimilation, the falling in toward our patterns, not only among the second generation, but among those of the first generation who believe higher education is important.

CHAPTER VII

OCCUPATION

In the country of the Basques three main types of occupation come to light. They are a little industry, fishing to a much larger extent, and much farming on small farms. Consequently, there are Basques in the fishing industries along the coast and Basques in the livestock country of California, Oregon, and Nevada. Stockton is largely dependent upon agriculture, and the deduction that the Basques are primarily farmers in this area is not difficult to make. The Basques migrated west (particularly to Nevada and California) and settled in the areas comparable to their native country. There are not many maritime Basques in this section.[1]

It seems that the Basques wished their sons to stay on the ancestral home to live in the same house, to work the same land. They were sorry indeed to see their sons go off to new countries but recognized that as their country was far too small, this migration was necessary. Of the first generation Basques in Stockton, not one had come from some place other than a small farm which had been in the family for generations. A few had tried fishing, but farm experience, particularly with livestock, was always someplace in their background. It is not a strange

[1] Interview No. 2, Mr. C.

occurrence then to find that most all the men, in fact all that were contacted, had, at one time or another, herded sheep. This also applies to every Basque person handled by George Tinkham in History of San Joaquin County California with Short Biographical Sketches.[1]

These men worked as sheep herders for men owning vast amounts of land, sheep, and cattle in California. As Mr. O. said, "The young men were fine in this occupation. They liked the life of a sheep herder -- they didn't mind being out on the range alone for months leading the 'uncomfortable' life of a bachelor."[2] The handling of sheep and cattle in large numbers was a new experience for these Basque men, for in their native land they had only a few head of various types of stock. That, however, was enough to teach them the essentials of caring for stock in small or large numbers. After saving their money for a few years (There are no places on the range to spend one's money.), they would go into business for themselves on the proverbial "shoe string". They never started their business on the small scale they were accustomed to in their native land, but always on a medium to large scale operation (five hundred to a couple thousand head). It was always a gamble of great magnitude for them, but lose or gain, it was taken in stride. "These hard-working, good businessmen, with clever, honest traits, who did a great deal of business among

[1] Tinkham, op. cit.

[2] Interview No. 3, Mr. O.

themselves, tended to be financial successes."[1]

When they were first establishing themselves, it was generally true that they aided one another and did a great deal of business with one another; this is not so apparent today, and shows a breakdown in the group feeling.[2] Another trend toward assimilation is shown in the establishment of large-scale operations instead of the small farms they had previously been accustomed to.

Among the early Basques there were a few who went into other lines of business. For example, one man who was previously a sheep herder owns a clothing store. Secondly, there are those who owned Basque hotels and bars. Many still do. These business men were also connected with the sheep industry previously or simultaneously.

The single first generation Basque women were engaged primarily in domestic work. In an interview with Mr. O., he said as follows:

> It was never difficult for the Basque women to obtain work. They were hard workers and clean and could do domestic work quite easily.[3]

The women often remained engaged in this type of employment until the time they married. From this time on, they worked only with their husbands, often doing manual labor on the ranches. Most of these women, many of whom were interviewed, now have lovely

[1] Interview No. 14, Mrs. R.

[2] Interview No. 8, Mr. O.

[3] Interview No. 3, Mr. O.

modern homes, complete with luxuries, and they feel it was worth all the labor they expended. It was curious to find two very attractive women who were being interviewed, chatting gaily about the time they worked as domestic workers for a prominent local family. The husband of one of these women was considered important enough to be listed as one of the men contributing considerably to the development of the city of Stockton.[1]

One oustanding characteristic of both the women and the men of the first generation Basques was that they considered their employment by someone else as only a means of attaining their own business and financial success. They never wished to work permanently for anyone other than themselves.

Although one found the hope expressed by the first generation that their sons eventually would succeed them in their business, this has not been the general trend. Of the families who had sons who followed their fathers' line of business six were in the sheep and cattle business, while the seventh helped his father with a Basque hotel. One parent talked of his son, who was a school teacher, and expressed the wish that he would eventually return to his sheep and cattle business in a few years. Others were employed by various firms about town, and a couple owned their own business establishments.

[1] Tinkham, op. cit.

In an interview with Mr. O., he tried to express what might be a plausible explanation of why many of the second generation Basques have not gone into the sheep business.

> Sheep is a frontier business. Land costs too much now. In 1946 there were 46,000,000 sheep in the United States, and in 1947 there were only 32,000,000 head. This shows that the sheep business is on the decline. Sheep also must be run in small herds now. This is because of the lack of grazing land and sheep herders. The American-born Basque will not stay in a sheep camp, cook his own meals, wash his own clothes, lead a hard life. Furthermore, not many young Basque men are coming into the country. Only a few come now and then.[1]

From this interview one might gather that the tendency away from the parent's way of life might not be wholly a matter of simply not desiring that type of work but a matter of economics involving certain factors of production.

In an interview with Mr. A. this point of view was expressed:

> The second generation, for the most part, "work for someone else", just like the rest of the American boys. A few have businesses of their own, but they are not sheep or cattle in their nature.[2]

In an interview with Mrs. C. this point of view was expressed:

> The American-born Basques simply haven't got the fortitude to take the big gambles their fathers took.[3]

Still in another interview Mrs. S. expressed her viewpoint:

> The sons should, if possible, continue as hard workers and eventually take over their father's business, but I do not think that the business should be handed over to them when they

[1] Interview No. 3, Mr. O.

[2] Interview No. 10, Mr. A.

[3] Interview No. 16, Mrs. C.

> come of age. They should be trained while they are growing up to know what it is to work and know the value of money. It isn't good to just give them everything.[1]

Mrs. S. was seemingly criticizing another Basque family, whose paternal parent had turned his entire business over to his sons upon retirement.

From the above statements we find a resentment on the part of the first generation that their children did not follow in their footsteps. This also is another indication of a breakaway from the old and well established, and whether it is good or bad is beside the question. This is a point of culture conflict, and the dominant culture has shown to be more successful.

As mentioned before, the Basques are conspicuous in their lack of Basque professional men in Stockton. There are several Basque doctors and lawyers in San Francisco, Bakersfield, and Fresno, and many would appreciate men in those fields of their own ethnic background in this city, especially if they had been here in the early days.

As for the second generation women, they have followed the pattern of the average American girl. They finish school, work for a few years, and end with the acquirement of their goal, the blessed state of matrimony. They make by far the greatest stride toward social assimilation.

[1] Interview No. 6, Mrs. S.

CHAPTER VIII

LANGUAGE

The Basque language is known as "Vascuence" to the Spaniards, but "Wuskera" to the Basques. There are seven independent provinces protected by the Pyrenean ranges, and as they have known no other unity than that of language, they call themselves by its name: "Euskalerri", the people ("herri") who speak "Euskera". Isolation without literary or cultural control has split Basque into numerous dialects and subdialects. It has been known adequately since the publication of Dechepure's poem in 1545 and Luzarraga's Basque New Testament in 1571; we have medieval jotting by the traveller Arnold Von Harff in the fifteenth century.[1]

Basques have occupied their present sites from time immemorial, but their territory was formerly more extensive. The last few years have seen a widening of the bilingual belt on both the Spanish and French side. A Castilianization of the principal towns of Spain gave an estimated loss of 70,000 speakers.[2]

As the origin of the language has to date not been determined, it has become a subject of myth. Basques take a pride in the fact

[1] W.J. Entwistle, The Spanish Language Together with Portuguese, Catalan and Basque, 15 (1938).

[2] Ibid.

that no one has been able to prove definitely (There is no agreement among authorities.) that the language roots are not known. Many Basques seriously claim it was the language of Adam and Eve, or the only language "to escape the Tower of Babel".[1] Quite possibly it is the oldest language in daily use on the earth. Those in Spain continue to speak it in spite of Franco's ban. In France there is no ban on the language, but it is definitely not taught in the schools.

Mr. O. expressed this opinion when questioned about the use of Basque in the Pyrenees:

> In the Basse Pyrenees the Basque language is spoken by all. It may die out over a period of many years due to the fact that the language is not taught in the schools. There are many isolated places in which French and Spanish have never been spoken. Basque is always spoken by the priests in the churches. We learned our catechism (at least, in Mr. O's time) in Basque. It is through this medium that the reading and written aspects of the language are kept alive.[2]

All the first generation Basques, upon arrival, brought with them as mental baggage at least two languages and sometimes three. That is, they all spoke Basque plus the language of their national origin, Spanish or French. Some of them spoke both French and Spanish. Many of the French Basques and their children acquired the Spanish language in the United States prior to the English language, due to the predominance of the Spanish element. Consequently, the author met in the course of interviewing a few first

[1] I. Wallace, op. cit.

[2] Interview No. 3, Mr. O. Mr. O. has not been in his native country for a good many years, but according to Catholic World, Vol. 165, June, 1947, what he predicted has been taking place. It has all been hastened by the Franco regime.

generation Basques who had four languages at their disposal: Basque, French, Spanish, and English. They are constantly taking every opportunity to speak any of the languages in order to keep in practice.

Mrs. G. said one day, "I just love to talk to Mrs. K. She speaks French, and I have so few opportunities these days to keep up the language that I am almost forgetting it."[1]

The first generation Basques made a conscious effort to teach their children the Basque language. All of the older second generation Basques, and most all of the younger age group, can speak the language; the rest understand it. Most parents tried to make their children speak Basque, at least before school age, so they would not be so inclined to answer in English. Some cases of second generation children could not speak English until after they had entered the grade schools. They lived on ranches which were quite remote, and their parents always spoke in Basque. Some of these second generation children speak the Spanish language quite fluently because of contact with help on the ranches who always spoke it. In the case of Mrs. D. (second generation) it was found that she spoke Spanish rather than Basque.[2] She explained that her parents wished her to speak the more useful language well, rather than speak two languages poorly.

In an interview with Mrs. I. she said as follows:

> The second generation Basques who speak the language never speak it among themselves here. They have husbands and wives

[1] Interview No. 4, Mrs. G.

[2] Interview No. 9, Mrs. D.

> who are not Basque and consequently cannot use it, although they will speak to their parents in Basque. However, the last time I was in Los Angeles, I went over into the section of town where many Basques live and discovered groups of youngsters speaking Basque on the streets, rather than English. Perhaps the language is dying out in this town because of the small number of Basques we have here, along with intermarriage and contact with other people.[1]

Mrs. I expressed exactly what had happened. A breakdown in the use of a specific language as well as other culture traits naturally follows contacts with other groups or social interaction.

As for the third generation Basques, only one was found that could speak the language well. As Mrs. I. explained in the following:

> My children understand Basque but do not speak it. In fact, they refuse to do so. What they understand has been taught them by their grandmother. My mother resides with us, and she constantly speaks to them in Basque in an effort to teach them the language. It is very difficult for me to speak in Basque to them all of the time, for my husband is not Basque, and we of necessity speak in a language common to the both of us. The children, consequently, do not hear enough of it to learn.[2]

This occurrence is common to many second generation Basque homes. When reviewing the situation, one can see a gradual deterioration in the use of the language from first generation to third. It is only a matter of time until the language will be no more.

[1] Interview No. 13, Mrs. I.

[2] Ibid.

CHAPTER IX

RELIGION

Of the religion of the Basques prior to Christianity, little is certainly known. The few notices we have point to a worship of the elements, the sun, the moon, and the morning star, and to belief in the immortality of the unburnt and unburied body.

The country of the Basques is today Roman Catholic in religion, and has been since the early days of Christianity. The relationship between Church and state among the Basques has been very remarkable. They are a highly religious people, eminently conservative in their religious practices. In religion alone, through Ignatius de Loyola of Quipuzcoa and Francis Xavier of Navarre, they have left their mark on Europe. "Catholic historians emphasize the fact that St. Ignatius Loyola, St. Francis Xavier, and in consequence the Society of Jesus (Jesuit order) were the greatest gifts of the Basques to the World."[1]

They have kept the earliest forms of Christian ritual, many being comparable to the Uniate Eastern Catholic rite rather than the Roman rite. The earlier forms of Christian marriage and

[1] I. Wallace, op. cit.

and of the primitive order of deaconess, forgotten elsewhere in the West, are still practiced by the Basques.

They are quite liberal with the clergy but insist that they be Basque. They will not accept the Spanish clergy. At the time most of the Basques in this community emigrated to this country, sermons and catechism were all spoken and taught in Basque. It was through this medium that the language was taught as far as reading and writing was concerned. The Basques are a traditionally pious people. It was unheard of to miss mass on Sunday or holy days. Their religious activity was not limited to Sunday observance. The doors of the churches were always open; religious services were frequent, and many attended Benediction and Holy Hour.

The impression given by the Basques in Stockton about attendance to religious services could be summed up by the statement made by Mrs. S.

> In the old Country we never missed mass. People were disrespectful of all who were not thoughtful of God. Here, the situation differs. Americans do not go to church very much, and no one thinks anything of it.[1]

In Stockton all the Basques are Catholic in religion. They all remain Catholic if only to the extent of making their Easter Duty. In order to remain a Catholic the Church requires that all should receive the sacraments (penance and Holy Eucharist) at least

[1] Interview No. 6, Mrs. S.

once a year and during the Easter time. Only one case was discovered in which complete breakaway was found; this person belonged to no other denomination and attended Catholic services upon occasion.

In interviews these statements were made:

> All Basques are Catholics; good or bad, they are Catholic. They will never change. They are too bull-headed to change from the religion of their ancestors.[1]

> We are mostly Catholic; in fact, all are. Many don't practice -- among the older men. They expect to be buried in the Church with a great funeral, but they never go to church when living.[2]

The note of disrespect found in the last prevailed in other interviews, even from those who knew they were speaking of themselves.

Of those who stay away from the Church, the older men predominate. These are the Christmas-Easter Catholics. They say that when they were children, they never missed mass. This change might have been due to a language barrier, but this is doubtful, because in the mass language can be no barrier, for Latin is used universally in the Western rite. One would be inclined to believe that this laxness might have been a result of the occupations they held as young men. As mentioned before, the occupations held by these young immigrants were always in the nature of sheepherding. Transportation was poor, and they stayed for months at a time on the range. Traveling thirty miles to mass by horse and buggy,

[1] Interview No. 10, Mr. A.

[2] Interview No. 6, Mrs. S.

leaving sheep without care, is not conducive to Sunday observance.

Religious service attendance among the second generation Basques and their children is relatively as high as that of the older generation. It is not confined to Sunday mass alone, but to other services as well. When calling to make an appointment with Mrs. I. for an interview, she explained that she would not be in for the next nine nights as she was making the Novena to St. Ann which was being conducted at the time at one of the local Catholic churches, which incidentally was not in her parish.[1] Other calls made at the time were met with a similar response. Later Mrs. I's mother mentioned to another person in the room that other Basque friends were making the novena also, and "her husband was going too!"[2] Mrs. I. maneuvered her two small children into bed for their afternoon nap with the promise that they could attend the novena with her that night.

Religious conflict is small between the parents, because although the number of second generation Basques married to Basques is small, a great many of them married Catholics.

Most of the second generation Basques have attended the local parochial schools, either when in high school or in grade school. At one time or another, their secular education has been combined

[1] Interview No. 13, Mrs. I.

[2] Interview No. 4, Mrs. G.

with religious education. Often this was heard, "When I was at St. Mary's, I knew ------."

The degree of fervor or intensity with which the parents carry on their religious activities is more often paralleled by their children among the Basques. There are exceptions, for some of the Basque parents have a degree of laxness in the practice of their religion, but still their children are sent to religious schools and are not permitted to become lax.

From the discussion above, one would gather that this is one attribute of the Basque people that has not been modified enough to count as an indication toward assimilation. This might be due to the fact that although this is by and large a Protestant country at least in this section Catholics are not so rare or so recent in arrival to be considered a minority group. Consequently, a change in religion is not warranted. One great change was the lack of insistence upon having church with Basque clergy, as was considered necessary in the native country.

CHAPTER X

ORGANIZATIONS

There are no formal organizations distinctly Basque in Stockton. At present, there are gatherings of Basques at the annual Basque picnic. The funeral of a Basque is also an occasion of the gathering of many Basques. In attendance at the picnics many of the second generation no longer attend as they did when they were in their teens. Today it is primarily attended by the older generation and their young unmarried children who have a "tendency to leave early".[1] All the Basques attend the funerals, for they feel it is their duty to pay their last respects during the final burial rites. There is no laxity among the Basques in this regard. As one non-Basque said, "I attended a funeral of an old Basque gentleman last week. If I had known there were that many Basques in California, I would have run my father-in-law for governor a long time ago."[2]

There was a closeness in the community of Basques in the early days. They stayed together out of necessity. It was a matter of language plus an economic factor. The bond of being a

[1] Interview No. 13, Mrs. T.

[2] Interview No. 17, Mr. O.

common ethnic group made it easy to obtain work through mutual aid. The older people still cling together, but not as they did years ago. Now they see their friends singly if they care to visit. As Mrs. S. said in an interview:

> In the old days you expected all the Basques without formal invitation on your birthday or Feast Day.[1] Or perhaps on your anniversary you would have arrangements made at a Basque hotel for a big party to which it was understood that all the Basques were invited. Why not? Were they not all your friends? No longer are there such large gatherings except for funerals and the annual Basque picnics."[2]

From the above discussion one might easily assume correctly that among the Basques there are no formal organizations restricted to these persons of Basque ancestry. In 1907 there was an attempt to organize a Basque lodge; it lived approximately one year. Although there are none in Stockton, the author was informed that they did exist in large cities such as San Francisco and Los Angeles. There was also an attempt among the women to start a card club for the Basque women, but it too was short-lived. These attempts have been confined to the first generation group.

The second generation have their own friends who may or may not be Basque. The men belong to local organizations such as the Amblers and Twenty-thirty Clubs. The women belong to local women's clubs such as Philomathean or Business and Professional

[1] It is a European practice to celebrate one's Feast Day, that is the Feast of the saint one is named after, rather than the birthday.

[2] Interview No. 5, Mrs. S.

Women's Club.

The lack of formal organization does not mean there was no organization among the Basques of any nature. This leads to the next section of this study, the Basque hotel, which is treated in a separate chapter because of importance, although it might fall in with Organizations.

CHAPTER XI

THE BASQUE HOTEL

The Basque hotel was at one time the nearest thing to an organization that could be found among the Basque people. Although it has been modified today from what it was at one time, it still does not bear much resemblance to what we bring into our mind's eye when we think of a hotel.

The original Basque hotel was established shortly after the first Basque migrations. They were organized to accommodate the single Basque men who were working in the locality, and what they really amounted to were boarding houses, whose patronage was exclusively people of Basque origin. The Basque hotel in Stockton handled single Basque men. These men were primarily sheepherders. The owner of the hotel acted as a "padrone" and arranged work for them with different sheep owners about the country. As more Basque families became established in Stockton and this locality, the Basque hotel developed into social gathering places. Here the entire Basque family would gather on certain nights of the week and spend the evenings playing cards, dancing, talking of home and having a general all-around gay time. The Basque hotel always had a pelota court near by, or "chistera"[1] as some of the

[1] "Chistera" is the name of the basket-like handle attached to the player's wrist (See cut, page 57).

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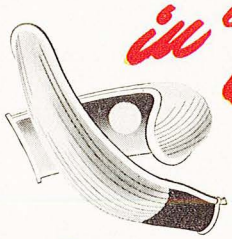

In Pelota, men are old at twenty-five

1 **"In a French village near Biarritz,** I watched a championship pelota game," writes an American friend of Canadian Club. "It looked as easy as American handball to me. So when the match was over, I asked the referee if I might try a game. Although I'm only 30, he said I was too old... that men learn to play pelota when they're boys. I was skeptical; so he smiled and said, 'If M'sieu doesn't believe me, try it...!'

2 **"I tried on the chistera,** a curved basket attached to a glove. The ball is caught in this contraption and flung back to the *fronton*, or wall. Since the court is two-thirds as long as a football field, it's strenuous for a beginner!

3 **"I played** with the two local champions, the Unhassobiscay brothers. They warned me that broken wrists are not uncommon—and that the hard ball can fracture a man's skull. In half an hour, I decided that I *was* too old for pelota.

4 **"Basque dances** after pelota games 'reunite the winners and the losers.' They're based on folklore and resemble a wild fandango. It's amazing that these Basques have strength left for such a dance after a game like pelota.

GAME OF PELOTA

Basques call it. It is the Basques' favorite game ("For us it is a religion."[1]), and the young men always spent their free afternoons playing. After the games, it was back into the hotel for a Basque dinner of good soup, barbecue, and vegetable salads. The second generation families still cook very much the same way and the same type of food. It seems those who have married Basques enjoy it as much as do the Basques. Then, every one joined in the traditional dances, many of which are French and Spanish, as well as Basque, in origin. They are, for example, "Quadreille", "La Hota", "Paerro Salda", "Faldanga", "Chistou", and Dance of the Archers.[2] Many of the younger generation still know how to perform these dances but no longer do so.

The family looked forward to these gatherings and often they started early on Sundays after mass with the young men entertaining the rest of the group on the pelota courts. It was at these hotels that the parties were held for new arrivals for which the entire Basque community would turn out.

Mrs. G., in an interview with her, gave the following report:

> I can remember, when I was younger, going every Tuesday and Sunday nights to the Basque Hotel. The entire family would go

1 I. Wallace, op. cit.

2 "Basque Dancers in the French Pyrenees", Travel, LXXXIX, 8-9 (May, 1947).

> and they would dance, eat, and have a good time. This practice somehow no longer continued. We miss it very much.[1]

Again, in another conversation with a Mrs. B.:

> Oh, yes, we always went to those gatherings, but as our children grew older, they would stay a few moments, and then they would want to go off with their own American friends.[2]

This practice was still going on until the start of World War II, at which time it ceased completely. It has not been reestablished. Some of the older members of the second generation, prior to marriage, recall attending these dances with their parents. After their marriage, they neglected going, and the practice was definitely on the decline.

Today the hotels have not only lost this function but have changed a great deal in character. They still room, for the most part, single Basque men, but not exclusively so. There still remains somewhat an atmosphere of the old practice. For example, when calling on one Basque person, another appointment had to be made, because they were all very busy about the hotel since one of the men had taken ill and they had to care for him. Two of the Basque hotels in town have dispensed with the boarding house services and serve the general public with Basque and Italian dinners. They also have opened bars. The third Basque hotel in Stockton still retains the same room and board function but has also opened a bar to the public. This is apparently done for economic reasons.

[1] Interview No. 4, Mrs. G.

[2] Interview No. 18, Mrs. B.

The Basque hotel was almost an institution among the Basques, and it is disappearing. Its only connection with its original purpose lies in the fact that they do still care for the single Basque men, although not as exclusively as before, and that they still serve Basque dinners, although to the general public, as well as to Basques. Here, again, we have another sign of decomposing of Basque practices and the assuming of other methods of entertainment, and the changes made in the character of the hotels naturally followed.

CHAPTER XII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The term assimilation was discussed in the first chapter as a basis for determing the process that has taken place. In answer to the questions asked in that chapter, the evidence indicates that it is social assimilation that has taken place among the Basques in Stockton. A brief resume of the degree of breakdown or lack of it in various aspects of culture will be given.

The positive indications that social assimilation has taken place are as follows:

1. Statistically speaking, 58% of the Basques in Stockton were born here. The average time spent here is approximately twenty-two years. Since time is a necessary factor in assimilation, this condition has been met in the case of the Basques.

2. Over a period of time the Basques have dispersed over the entire city with regards to domicile, instead of remaining more or less clustered in a limited area. As Basques were never confined by restrictive covenants, this dispersion was not hampered.

3. The Basques here have settled in a decidedly urban area, although all of the first generation came from extremely small rural communities. Although they are agriculturists for the most part, as many Americans in California they prefer the urban life of the

larger community. This is a definite change to the pattern of life of the majority group.

4. There has been a definite change in the attitudes and reception of new Basque immigrants. Over a period of thirty years an attitude of welcome has degenerated to one of indifference. This means a lesser degree of group consciousness and a movement toward assimilation.

5. In marriage there has been little endogamy; pride in the ethnic group has not been so important as to prevent the marriage of the second generation to persons other than those of Basque origin.

6. The first generation Basques had decidedly little formal education (often less than the grade school), but they have sent their children on to college. Education is an important factor in assimilation, for it is here that new patterns are taught in a formal way.

7. In spite of the first generation's wishes, a movement away from the traditional occupation of stock ranching ensued. This movement into new occupations has not resulted in any concentration in any other field.

8. The breakdown in the use of the Basque language started with the first generation in their use of English, Spanish, and French instead of Basque. The second generation speak Basque to their parents and older generation Basques, but outside of that

never use it at all. The third generation, except for one or two persons, does not speak the language.

9. There has been no change in religious practices, but no Basque Church was set up with Basque clergy presiding as was deemed necessary in the native country.

10. Although no formal organizations existed for persons of Basque origin for any length of time, they did cling together durin their first years. They used to spend their evenings together, but even this practice is declining, and for many has ceased altogether.

11. A modification in the nature and function of the Basque Hotel has taken place. They are no longer exclusively Basque boarding houses; they now cater to other guests, serve the general public food, and have added public bars.

The above list indicates social assimilation has taken place. Here are some points which show there is a decided lack of it:

1. Although little effort has been made among the Basques to retain their cultural identity, they are proud of their ethnic background, be they first, second, or third generation.

2. The old ties are adhered to somewhat in the case of weddings. No second generation Basque would marry (they generally have large weddings) without inviting old Basque acquaintances of their parents, although their parents may not have seen these persons for years.

3. When a Basque dies, every Basque in the locality, and even those living at some distance, looks upon it as his duty to attend the funeral.

4. Among the first generation one's intimate friends are Basque, although they have had many contacts with non-Basques in other than a business way.

5. If all persons present in a collection of people are Basque, Basque is spoken.

6. The older generation adhere in spirit to the old ties in that they wish their children to follow them in the same line of business.

In conclusion, as has been stated before, it is social assimilation that has taken place. There is a decided lack of cultural assimilation among the Basques, in that little of the old culture has been retained and none has been taken up by other members of the community so as to produce a unique situation in this city. It is social assimilation in that there has been among these persons, who were unlike Americans in their social heritages, a coordination of activities by which they have come to share the same bodies of sentiments, ideas, traditions, loyalties, and similar standards.

Why has assimilation taken place to such an extent in such a short period of time? Although it is not the purpose of this study to answer this question, a few reasons are proposed. The

number of Basques in this community is not large, and they were never confined to one area of town by restrictive covenants. It is difficult for such a small number to retain their closeness when they are dispersed widely and their daily contacts are with persons other than Basques. They made no deliberate effort to maintain their own ethnic identity. Why this is is hard to understand, unless being rather independent people, they discarded clannishness when it was no longer necessary for the group's security. Furthermore, when the Basques first came to Stockton, the class structure of the town was not so rigid that movement virtually was next to the impossible. This made it easy for even the first generation to traverse several levels of the class structure in a relatively short period of time. In addition, the second and third generations have all been educated in American schools. This would give a great impetus toward the assimilation of any ethnic group. These reasons are purely speculative and present a problem for a future study.

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